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CONSUMER TIME

R-78

Hoarding

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ANNOUNCER: Consumer Time today brings you a story of
Christmas Eve.

MUSIC: ORGAN, FAINT OFF MIKE, PLAYING "ADESTE FIDELIS."

CONTINUE IN B.G. TO END OF SONG.

JOAN: (AGE 18. AWAY FROM MIKE) Dad - listen!

PAUL: Don't bother me, Joan. Can't you see I'm trying
to set up this Christmas tree?

JOAN: (SINGING SOFTLY) "Oh, come, all ye faithful....."

PAUL: There - I guess that'll hold. (CALLING) Oh,
Margaret ---!

MARGARET: (OFF FLUTTERY TYPE) Yes, dear---?

PAUL: Bring the Christmas tree lights, will you?
The old ones.

MARGARET: All right.

JOAN: I can see the people going into church. A lot of them ---

PAUL: Well, why don't you go over there if you want to?

JOAN: Why don't you and Mother go?

PAUL: Oh, you know me. Never much of a church-goer.

JOAN: You - aren't ashamed to - are you, Dad?

PAUL: Ashamed! No. Why should I be?

JOAN: Well, I just thought

PAUL: Joan - what's got into you?

JOAN: Nothing ---

PAUL: Yes - something has. Ever since you came home for your vacation you've been acting strangely ---

JOAN: Well, maybe college - I don't know - getting out and getting some new ideas - has changed my view of things.

PAUL: Well, if they're teaching you to come home and tell your father he ought to go to church - (LIGHTLY) I'll stop right now paying your tuition.

JOAN: No, it's not that But you know, somehow I feel I ought to go tonight - to pray for Steve. Might help to keep him safe.

PAUL: Why don't you then? You'd probably see a lot of your friends -- also home from college.

JOAN: No, - no, I don't want to.

PAUL: But you always have gone on Christmas Eve.

JOAN: I know ... (LONGINGLY) Remember last year - how the carolers came here after church - Steve, and ----

PAUL: You think a lot of Steve Martin - don't you, daughter?

JOAN: Everything. All the time.

PAUL: Well, some day this blasted war will be over, and Steve will be back home again.

JOAN: What day, Dad? When?

PAUL: Well, Joan, I'm preparing for a pretty long siege. Want to be sure my family's taken care of till it's over.

JOAN: I know. That's just the trouble.

PAUL: What do you mean?

JOAN: Oh - you wouldn't understand.

PAUL: Joan - will you please give me a civil answer?
What is the matter with you?

JOAN: No - please - let's not talk about it. Not on Christmas Eve.

PAUL: Well, don't blame me. I'm trying to make your Christmas just as happy as possible. (BRIGHTENING) Wait till you see what's in those packages!

JOAN: I wonder why Steve didn't send me anything. I thought surely he would.

PAUL: So that's what's worrying you. (HE CHUCKLES) That's why you're so on edge.

JOAN: Why?

PAUL: Steve. You're afraid maybe he's met some other girl over there ---

JOAN: No ---

PAUL: Well, don't you worry. You'll get a present from him. Probably just got delayed ---

MARGARET: (FADING IN) Well, I finally found the Christmas tree lights. Where do you think they were? Up in the attic, under the coffee. (SHE LAUGHS)

JOAN: Under the coffee! What's coffee doing in the attic?

MARGARET: I have three cartons of coffee stored up there. Isn't that lucky? Twenty-four pounds in each carton.

JOAN: Twenty-four - times three..... Seventy-two pounds of coffee! Mother!

PAUL: Well, don't shout about it.

JOAN: So, you do know it's against the law.

MARGARET: It is not against the law. I bought that before coffee was rationed.

JOAN: But you knew it was going to be rationed, Mother.

MARGARET: Of course - or I wouldn't have bought it.

JOAN: You see?

MARGARET: Well, the man sold it to me.

JOAN: Sure he sold it. He didn't want all that coffee sitting around on his shelves getting stale.

MARGARET: Getting stale! But it's all sealed up - in the carton.

JOAN: A lot of good that will do.

MARGARET: But - but..... Paul - if that's true - stale coffee...! Why ---

PAUL: Calm down, my dear. Joan - why do you want to get your mother so excited over a little thing like coffee?

JOAN: It isn't a little thing- not when it's rationed, and we have so much more than our share!

MARGARET: (WAILING) Seventy-two pounds! Oh, dear ---!

PAUL: Now, Margaret ---

JOAN: (MEASURING HER WORDS) I suppose you think that hundred-gallon tank of gasoline ---

PAUL: (CUTTING IN) Joan ---!

JOAN: (GOING RIGHT ON)... Out in the garage is also a little thing.

PAUL: How did you know about that?

JOAN: Oh, I peeked beneath the coverings. Thought maybe it might be a Christmas surprise. (PAUSE) It was a surprise all right.

PAUL: Well, for heaven's sake keep quiet about it. If anyone in town finds out I've got that gas ----

JOAN: I think they suspect it already.

PAUL: Nonsense. I had it delivered at night - from twenty miles away.

JOAN: (AFTER PAUSE) You know, I heard on the radio about some people who had gasoline stored in their garage, and it exploded and killed their baby.

MARGARET: Joan! What a dreadful thing to suggest!

JOAN: I'm not suggesting it, Mother. I'm just telling you what happened.

MARGARET: Well, let's not think about such things on Christmas Eve. Such a lovely night too. (TURNING OFF) Look how the snow sparkles - like millions of diamonds.

JOAN: And everybody else is in church.

MARGARET: Yes - they're probably praying by now. Our Reverend Brown is reading the story of the first Christmas.

JOAN: I wonder if Jesus ever hoarded things.

MARGARET: Joan! That's sacrilegious.

JOAN: I didn't mean it to be.

PAUL: Joan - suppose you stop bothering your mother and help me string these lights.

JOAN: All right.

PAUL: We have lots of new ones in the closet. Will you go get them?

JOAN: All right. (TURNING OFF) The hall closet?

PAUL: (RAISING HIS VOICE) Yes - way back in.

MARGARET: (SOTTO) Paul - I'm worried about Joan.

PAUL: You needn't be. She's just upset - about Steve.

MARGARET: But she says the strangest things. Yesterday she told me I had no social conscience.

PAUL: Social conscience! Huh! She practically told me I have no conscience at all.

MARGARET: Well, what does she mean - social conscience?

PAUL: Oh, just that you don't fret because the folks on the other side of the track don't have a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage.

MARGARET: But she was talking about the war too. As if I'm not doing my part. Why, I've knit three sweaters for the Red Cross!

PAUL: I know you have, my dear. Don't let her bother you. She's just gotten some crackpot ideas. Youth, you know. They think they know everything.

JOAN: (FADING IN) Dad - here are the lights you've been hoarding.

PAUL: Well, we'll have enough lights on our Christmas tree, anyhow.

JOAN: Your Christmas tree. I don't even want to look at it.

PAUL: What?

MARGARET: Why, Joan --! After your father goes to all this trouble.

JOAN: I don't want to have anything to do with these lights - or that coffee - or the gasoline.

PAUL: You'll be glad enough to have that gasoline when you want to go driving. Why, we couldn't take that trip tomorrow to see your Grandmother without it.

JOAN: I'm not going.

PAUL: Not going!

JOAN: I'd love to see Grandma, Dad, but I - I'm not going there on stolen gasoline.

MARGARET: Stolen!

JOAN: That's what it is. Taken from somebody else - so they have to go without.

MARGARET: Now, that's just silly. Everybody knows there's no real shortage of gasoline. Only rubber. Why, why this country has more gasoline than it can use.

JOAN: Yes, but not where it's needed. Not here in New Jersey. And the fact that we have all that gas in our garage may mean that some war-workers can't get to the factory on time.

PAUL: Listen, Joan - I need gasoline too - for my own work, here at home.

JOAN: But Dad - we can't think of just ourselves. We've got to consider the good of the whole country.
Everybody.

PAUL: You never considered them before.

JOAN: No - Guess I've learned a lot these past few months - getting out and talking to people.

PAUL: Humph!

JOAN: I never realized that other people - perfectly nice, intelligent people - had ideas so different from ours.

PAUL: Well, you needn't try to bring any of those ideas into this house. And you needn't criticize me - and the way I work for my family.

JOAN: Even in wartime?

PAUL: No. I need my car more than other people. Why, whenever my best customers come to town, I have to chauffeur them around.

JOAN: So that's why people suspect you . . . They've seen you driving around.

PAUL: Nonsense. They don't suspect me.

JOAN: Yes, they do. They know we're hoarders. .

MARGARET: Hoarders! What an ugly word.

JOAN: But we are.

PAUL: Joan - who do you think suspects we're - that we have an extra supply of gas?

JOAN: (BITTERLY) Everyone. The whole town knows it. I could just feel it - when I came home.

MARGARET: Feel what, dear?

JOAN: A coldness - suspicion. They think it's not fair for us to have so much when they're trying to play their part and stick by the rules of the game - and they're right.

PAUL: Now, Joan ---

JOAN: This whole town has turned against us. Even - even Steve's mother.

MARGARET: Steve's mother!

JOAN: She thinks we're traitors - and we are! I - oh, I'm so ashamed! (SHE STARTS TO CRY)

MARGARET: Why, Joan dear ---!

PAUL: (WORRIED) What did Mrs. Martin - Steve's mother - do to make you think this? What did she say?
(PAUSE) Answer me.

JOAN: (TRYING TO CURB HER TEARS) Well, yesterday - when I drove downtown - I saw her walking along with an armload of bundles. So I stopped and offered her a ride. But she wouldn't get in the car.

MARGARET: She wouldn't!

JOAN: She - she said it would waste rubber and gas - driving so far out of my way.

MARGARET: Oh, well, that's just silly.

PAUL: (RELIEVED) You see - there's nothing to this. It's just the child's imagination. Just because she has Steve on the brain --

JOAN: It is not. Other people are avoiding us too, They - they hate us.

PAUL: They're just jealous - that's all. Narrow-minded gossips. What do we care what they think or say about us? We've got everything we want - haven't we?

MUSIC: START TO SING IN VOICES SINGING "SILENT NIGHT" -
VERY FAINT. OFF MIKE.

MARGARET: (PATHETICALLY) But Paul - I don't want to be hated.

PAUL: You aren't, my dear.

JOAN: You are, Mother, and it's not ---

PAUL: Joan! You will please stop ---

JOAN: Listen

MUSIC: LOUDER, BUT STILL OFF MIKE

JOAN: The people are coming out of church. They'll go around town now, singing carols - won't they? Always before they've come to our house first - because we live so near. I wonder if they'll come to our house this year . . . ?

MARGARET: (AFTER PAUSE. TURNING OFF) Let's watch and see --

PAUL: Margaret - don't be ridiculous. Come away from that window.

MARGARET: (AWAY, FIRMLY) I want to watch . . . They're coming down the church steps now - the carolers . . . Down the sidewalk ----!

JOAN: I wonder which way they'll turn . . .

MUSIC: SINGING UP, FAIRLY CLOSE. THEN START GRADUAL FADE.

MARGARET: (SLOWLY) They're going the other way.

PAUL: That's just because Joan isn't with them . . . Come away. Draw the curtains.

MARGARET: Wait! Somebody's coming toward our house! One woman ----

JOAN: Let me see ----

MARGARET: (FADING IN) Can't make out who it is yet ----

JOAN: It - why, it's Mrs. Martin!

MARGARET: It is! And she's coming here!

JOAN: (TURNING OFF) I'll go let her in

PAUL: You see, Margaret - it was all Joan's imagination - about people turning against us.

MARGARET: Oh, Paul - I'm so glad!

JOAN: (OFF) Come right in, Mrs. Martin. Here - I'll take your coat.

MARTIN: (FADING IN) No, dear - I - I won't be staying ---

MARGARET: Mrs. Martin ---

MARTIN: Evening, Mrs. Baker - Mr. Baker.

PAUL: Good evening.

MARGARET: How nice of you to come see us on Christmas Eve!

MARTIN: Well, I have a letter here from Steve. I thought Joan might like to read it.

JOAN: Oh, I would! I haven't heard from him in so long ---

MARTIN: I hadn't heard either - for a long time - till today.

JOAN: Shall I read it aloud?

MARGARET: Yes, dear. We'd all like to hear it.

JOAN: All right

SOUND: LETTER UNFOLDED.

JOAN: (READING) "Dear Mom What's all this I hear about the folks back home griping because they've got to" (SHE STOPS) Dad - I think you'd better read this.

PAUL: Why?

JOAN: Here---

PAUL: All right - "What's all this I hear about the folks back home griping because they've got to stay home these days (MORE SLOWLY) instead of driving all around the country? Boy, wouldn't we like a chance to stay home for a change!" (HE HESITATES)

JOAN: Go on, Dad ---

PAUL: "If the folks at home could trade places with us for even a little while, I bet they'd go back there and use every ounce of gas and rubber they've got to turn out guns and planes and tanks and get this whole mess over with just as soon as possible. We're not going through all this hell just so a lot of ---" (HE STOPS)

JOAN: Go on.

PAUL "So a lot of stuffed shirts can go joy-riding.
(PAUSE)

MARGARET: Goodness! He sounds so serious.

PAUL: (WHO NOW ALSO SOUNDS SERIOUS) "Well, Mom - this isn't much of a letter, but it's how I feel: I'll write more later. Say hello to Joan for me, will you, when you see her? Tell her I'll write just as soon as I can. Joan Now there's a gal who always plays the game. So long, Mom - till next time. Much love, Steve."

JOAN: (THOUGHTFULLY) "Always plays the game....."

MARTIN: I thought you'd like to know that he mentioned you - in his last letter.

JOAN: His last letter! (THEN, RELIEVED) Oh - you mean the last you've received.

MARTIN: (QUIETLY) No. I mean his very last letter.

MARGARET: Mrs. Martin ---!

PAUL: You mean - Steve is ---?

MARTIN: I got a wire - this evening, just before church. It said Steve died bravely - defending the principles of democracy and equality in which he believed. It just said - he was killed in action.

JOAN: (SOTTO) Steve - killed in action!

MUSIC: FINAL CHORDS - SILENT NIGHT - SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE.

MONTGOMERY: Hello, consumers. This is Don Montgomery, your Consumers' Counsel in the Department of Agriculture. I have a news item for you today that isn't very pleasant for me to pass along at this holiday season. The Department of Agriculture is getting ready to handle a lot of new responsibilities that have been given to it, to do this big wartime food job. You know how important food is in a war like this, food for our fighting forces all over the world, and food for civilians in allied nations and occupied countries, too.

Now all this is going to take a lot of the food that our farmers produce, so we're going to have to make sure that we put to good use all the food we keep here for our own people, aren't we?

You know all this, of course. The news I have for you is that I shall not be the Consumers' Counsel in this new arrangement because that job is going to be done in a different way, and I have resigned.

So this is the last time I shall be talking to you on this program. I shall miss talking to you, and I shall miss the grand friendly letters so many of you write to us.

Now by way of saying goodbye, I want to come back for a minute to our story today - the story of some people who did know and some people who didn't know that the handling of these problems that war puts up to us is a job that everyone has a part in. That means you, and it means the Government too. Mr. and Mrs. Baker weren't doing their part when they hoarded those scarce goods, But of course the only satisfactory answer will be found when we get those scarce things rationed. On many foods, anyhow, I'm sure that's what the Government will be doing, and soon I hope. Then all of you can know what your share is, and then all of you can be sure that you get your share. Sure, it will be hard at times to get the hang of it, but you can handle your side of the job, and I know you will.

Goodbye then, and keep tuning in on Consumer Time because I feel sure the program will keep coming to you, and I hope you will keep on liking it.

ANNOUNCER:

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